

- 1 -

Date: 3/31/04Express Mail Label No. EL 955641105 145

Inventors: Bryan S. Jones, Tom Doherty and Raymond Murphy
Attorney's Docket No.: 3518.1023-000

HEAD-TO-HEAD CONNECTOR SPINAL FIXATION SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Spinal fixation systems are implanted during a surgical procedure to treat a variety of problems that include correction of congenital spinal deformities, repair of spinal injuries and fusion of vertebra to stabilize degenerative conditions and alleviate chronic lower back pain. It is well known in the correction of spinal deformities to affix a rod or pair of rods longitudinally to the spinal column with a plurality of screws. It is further common to cross link or interconnect the longitudinal rods to provide additional stabilization by using at least one additional member to horizontally bridge the pair of spinal rods. Devices such as these commonly consist of a brace or connector for providing the desired lateral support. The connector is fastened to each of the spinal rods by clamps or other means located on each end of the connector.

Usually, a surgeon first attaches the screws to the spine in appropriate positions, then attaches each screw to a spinal rod and determines where to place the connectors. However, a curvature of the spine and limited available space sometimes results in such an alignment of the screws that a connector must be skipped at a position where the surgeon would place it otherwise. This can happen when linear distance between two adjacent screws is insufficient for fastening a connector to the rod.

Therefore, a need exists for a spinal fixation system that overcomes or minimizes the above-referenced problems.